

Testimony before the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee
Testimony of John M. Romanow, Esq.
March 17, 2016

Good day, Senator Duff, Representative Janowski, Senator Kane, Representative Buck-Taylor and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is John Romanow. It is an honor and a privilege to be nominated by Governor Dannel P. Malloy to continue to serve on the Department of Education's Panel of Arbitrators, representing the interests of Local and Regional Boards of Education.

I am a graduate of the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations (BS, 70) and have a law degree from New York Law School (JD *cum laude* '75). I have an extensive background in labor/management relations, particularly in the public sector. I began my career working for the New York City Office of Labor Relations, while attending law school at night. I came to Connecticut in 1975 and began serving as the Director of Labor Relations for the City of New Haven in 1976.

Subsequently, I engaged in the practice of law, representing numerous public and private sector clients in all aspects of labor law and employee relations. Since 1986, I have been self-employed, primarily as an advocate arbitrator, having served on the Education Panel since 1993 and also as an Alternate Management Member of the State Board of Mediation and Arbitration. For many years, I also served as one of three members on teacher termination panels until the law was changed last year to provide only a single arbitrator for that process.

I believe that interest arbitration has served the parties and the public well here in Connecticut. I base this opinion on the totality of my experience as an advocate for more than 25 years and as a practicing attorney and management representative in Connecticut for some ten years prior to becoming an arbitrator. While it is certainly not a perfect system, it is a statutory framework that has achieved its intended purpose over many years. It works best when both parties are represented by experienced professionals who understand the technical requirements of the process, as well as its practical limitations. Likewise, the process requires a group of experienced practitioners to

serve as panel members to ensure that decisions are made in compliance with the statutory standards. If I have any concern about the future for this process, it is that these experienced practitioners, especially arbitrators, are disappearing, one by one, and there is no pipeline or training program by which new competent arbitrators are being minted.

These are difficult economic times for our State. Over the course of the most recent recession and continuing to this day, arbitration has served as an important instrument to ensure that settlements and awards recognize the fiscal circumstances in which we find ourselves. Some time ago, the statute was amended to require that arbitration panels give priority to the Public Interest and the Financial Capability of the Public Employer. The role of the advocate arbitrator is particularly important to ensure that arbitration panels continue to properly apply this priority standard as well as the other statutory standards. It would be my great honor and privilege to continue to serve in this capacity.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions the Committee members may have.